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CRIME SUSPENSTORIES

AUTHORIZED A.C.M.P.
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CRIME

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE!
AN ILLUSTRATED TERROR-TALE FROM THE HAUNT OF FEAR!

THESE DARK DESERTED STREETS MAKE ME NERVOUS EVER SINCE I SAT ON THE JURY THAT CONDEMNED PETER KARDOFF! BUT WHAT AM I AFRAID OF? HE WAS HANGED THIS MORNING!
JOHN CRAIG

A TOAST... TO DEATH!

I DON'T KNOW WHY I EVER MARRIED THE OLD PIG IN THE FIRST PLACE! I CERTAINLY DIDN'T *LOVE* HIM...HMP! NO GIRL COULD LOVE *THAT* MISERABLE OLD FOOL! PERHAPS I... WELL, LET ME TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY!

'I FIRST MET HIM IN 'FRISCO' WHEN I WAS NINETEEN. HE WAS A VINTNER, AND HAD JUST SOLD A BIG SHIPMENT OF WINE. WE HAD LOTS OF GOOD TIMES...'
HAVING FUN, SHERRY?
YEAH! C'MON, LET'S DANCE!
'HE SPENT PLENTY OF DOUGH, AND I GUESS I EXPECTED IT TO BE LIKE THAT EVEN AFTER I MARRIED HIM.
WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOUR MONTHS! YOU HAVEN'T TAKEN ME OUT ONCE!
I CAN'T HELP IT! THE GRAPES KEEP ME BUSY!
'BUT IT REALLY WASN'T BAD. I LOLLED AROUND IN THE SUN, AND TOOK LIFE EASY...'
'YES, IT HAD BEEN NICE AT FIRST... BUT DOING NOTHING SOON BECAME VERY BORING...'
...BUT ALPHONSE, I WANT TO HAVE FUN! CAN'T WE GO OUT TONIGHT?
SORRY, SHERRY, BUT THE GRAPES NEED ALL MY ATTENTION! YOU UNDERSTAND!
'IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ALL RIGHT IF THE HUGE ACRES OF VINEYARDS REQUIRED HIS SPECIAL ATTENTION... BUT HE LEFT THAT TO HIS HIRED WORKERS! WHAT HE CONCERNED HIMSELF WITH WAS A STINKIN' VINE THAT GREW JUST OUTSIDE THE HOUSE... HIS SPECIAL BABY!'
ARE YOU GOING TO SIT OUT HERE ALL NIGHT?
BUT, SHERRY! I'VE RECEIVED FROST WARNINGS! I HAVE TO SEE THAT THE SMUDGE POTS KEEP MY GRAPES WARM!
'IT WAS FROM THIS SPECIAL VINE THAT HE MADE HIS FINEST WINE... WHICH HE KEPT IN A SMALL CASK. IT WAS DELICIOUS... BUT I WOULD NEVER ADMIT IT!'
AHH-H-H! SUCH BOUQUET! SUCH FRAGRANCE! ISN'T IT SIMPLY SUPERB?
PHOOEY!
2

'I SOON BEGAN TO HATE ALPHONSE FOR THE ATTENTION HE LAVISHED ON THE GRAPES! AND WITH NOTHING TO DO, I HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT...'
HE NEVER PAYS ANY ATTENTION TO ME.' ALL HE CARES ABOUT IS HIS SPECIAL WINE.' I HATE HIM!
I OUGHT TO LEAVE HIM... BUT WHY SHOULD I GIVE UP THIS LUXURY? EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE... IF ONLY ALPHONSE WERE OUT OF THE WAY...
HMMM..
'I SOON WAS GIVEN A PERFECT CHANCE TO RID MYSELF OF HIM. HE HAD TO TRAVEL TO ITALY ON BUSINESS, AND ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE I WAS WELL PREPARED...'
THIS BOTTLE OF CYANIDE WILL FIX HIM!
A TOAST... TO A SUCCESSFUL TRIP... DARLING!
AWK.' MY... MY THROAT! I'M.... I'M BURNING UP.' SHERRY.' YOU... YOU POISONED ME.'
HELP.' HELP ME.' SHERRY.' I'M DYING! HELP ME.' OOH-HH-HH...
MURDER MYSTERY
3

'I WAS UNNATURALLY CALM. QUICKLY, I BEGAN DRAGGING HIM OVER TO THE WINDOW...'

UNGH!..WEIGHS A TON...FAT PIG! I'M GLAD HE'S DEAD!

'I OPENED THE WINDOW! WITH A SUPREME EFFORT, I LIFTED HIM TO THE SILL, AND PUSHED HIM OUT..'

THERE! NOW TO GET OUTSIDE!

'THAT HAD BEEN THE EASIEST WAY TO GET HIM OUTSIDE...AND HE HADN'T DROPPED FAR..'

...NOW I'LL JUST DRAG HIM OVER HERE TO THE SPECIAL... ...UNGH... GRAPEVINE...

'I WORKED ALL THAT NIGHT... DIGGING A GRAVE FOR HIS BODY.'

...(PANT) LOVES HIS GRAPES, DOES HE? (PANT) I'LL SEE THAT HE'LL BE WITH THEM (PANT) FOREVER!

'BY DAYBREAK, THE JOB WAS COMPLETED.'

THERE! EVERYTHING IS BURIED! HIS BODY... LUGGAGE...EVERYTHING! BURIED WITH HIS PRECIOUS GRAPES!

'NO ONE NOTICED ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS. AS FAR AS ANYONE KNEW, ALPHONSE WAS AWAY...ON BUSINESS!'

HA! HA! HA! THIS IS GOING TO BE PERFECT! IN A FEW DAYS I'LL START WRITING THE LETTERS!

'I WROTE LETTERS TO MY HUSBAND IN ITALY... AND WHEN I RECEIVED THEM ALL BACK, I CALLED THE POLICE!'

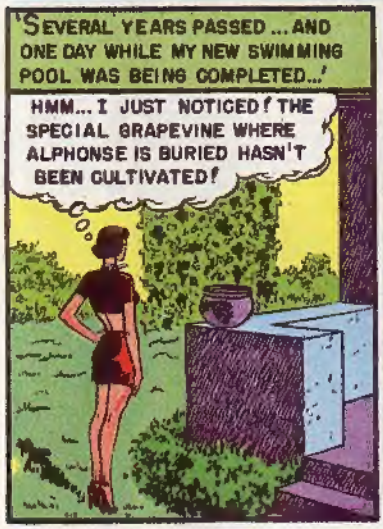
YES, INSPECTOR, I'M WORRIED! ALPHONSE SHOULD BE IN ITALY, BUT ALL MY MAIL HAS COME BACK UNOPENED! COULD YOU INVESTIGATE FOR ME?

AND INVESTIGATE THEY DID! I SPENT MANY TRYING WEEKS THEN, BUT IT ALL BLEW OVER!'
WE KNOW YOUR HUSBAND NEVER LEFT THE COUNTRY, BUT AS YET WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE HIM! HE'S JUST DISAPPEARED!
BUT INSPECTOR! WHAT WILL I DO?

... LOOKS LIKE HE'S DESERTED YOU! HAPPENS OFTEN! JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE! HE MAY COME BACK!
OH... I SEE! THANK YOU!

'WHEN THE INSPECTOR HAD GONE, I LAUGHED! I ROARED WITH LAUGHTER, AND THE JOY OF KNOWING I WAS SAFE!'
WHAT A WONDERFUL FEELING! THE POLICE DON'T SUSPECT A THING!

'FROM THEN ON, I KNEW ALL I HAD TO DO WAS WAIT! BUT I ENJOYED MYSELF TOO...'
THE FOREMAN TAKES CARE OF ALL THE WORK TO BE DONE, AND THE BUSINESS RUNS ITSELF! IN SEVEN YEARS I'LL BE LEGALLY FREE FROM ALPHONSE!


'SEVERAL YEARS PASSED ... AND ONE DAY WHILE MY NEW SWIMMING POOL WAS BEING COMPLETED...'
HMM... I JUST NOTICED! THE SPECIAL GRAPEVINE WHERE ALPHONSE IS BURIED HASN'T BEEN CULTIVATED!

... I HAVEN'T GONE NEAR IT IN YEARS! JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE I THINK I'LL ASK THE FOREMAN ABOUT IT! I DON'T WANT TO TAKE ANY CHANCES ON AROUSING ANYONE'S SUSPICIONS!

...WHY, CERTAINLY, MA'AM! I'LL BE GLAD TO SEND ONE OF MY MEN OVER TO HELP YOU!
THANK YOU...

'THE NEXT MORNING, AS I FINISHED BREAKFAST, I HEARD A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. I OPENED IT...'

OH...

MORNING, MA'AM! MY NAME IS JACK THOMPSON! THE FOREMAN SENT ME OVER... SAID YOU HAD SOME SPECIAL WORK FOR ME!

MY HEART BEAT LIKE THUNDER IN MY BREAST AT THE SIGHT OF THIS YOUNG, HANDSOME GOD. I CLUTCHED MY ROBE TIGHTER ABOUT ME...'

WORK? OH! OH, YES! ER...WELL, I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT! I HAVE TO DRESS!

FINE, MA'AM! I'LL WAIT!

I FELT LIKE A SCHOOL GIRL AS I STOOD BY, WATCHING JACK PICK THE GRAPES... AND WHEN HE TURNED TO SPEAK TO ME, I TREMBLED WITH EXCITEMENT...

...THIS ENOUGH GRAPES, MA'AM?

YES! YES... JACK! THAT'S ENOUGH!

NEVER HAD I EXPERIENCED SUCH A FEELING! AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, WHILE HE PROCESSED THE WINE, I FOUND THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM HIM!'

HE WAS YOUNGER THAN I, BUT I KNEW HE WAS ATTRACTED TO ME! WHEN THE WINE HAD BEEN MADE, WE STORED IT IN THE WINE CELLAR...'

...GUESS I WON'T BE SEEING YOU AGAIN, MA'AM!

OH...ER...YES, YOU WILL! I... I HAVE MORE THINGS FOR YOU TO DO!

I GRASPED THE FLIMSIEST EXCUSES TO KEEP HIM WITH ME, AND AS TIME PASSED WE REALIZED WE LOVED ONE ANOTHER...'

JACK...

OH, SHERRY... SHERRY, MY DARLING! I WANT YOU SO!

'FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I WAS TRULY, DEEPLY IN LOVE! IT WAS *EXCITING*... AND YET IT MADE ME FEEL COMFORTABLE AND SECURE...'

WHEN CAN WE BE MARRIED, SHERRY?

WE MUST WAIT, JACK! I'M NOT LEGALLY FREE TO MARRY UNTIL SEVEN YEARS AFTER MY HUSBAND'S...ER... DISAPPEARANCE! HAVE PATIENCE.

THE YEARS DRIFTED BY, SLOWLY BUT HAPPILY! THEN, ONE NIGHT, JACK CAME TO THE HOUSE...'
SAY...WHAT'S GOING ON?
A CELEBRATION! TONIGHT THE SEVEN YEARS ARE ENDED! I'M FREE TO MARRY YOU!
WONDERFUL!
...AND AS A SPECIAL TREAT, I'VE BROUGHT THIS KEG OF WINE UP FROM THE CELLAR! IT'S THE WINE THAT BROUGHT US TOGETHER, DEAREST!
A TOAST, DEAR... TO OUR LOVE AND FUTURE HAPPINESS!
...TO OUR LOVE AND FUTURE HAPPINESS!
ANOTHER?
NOT FOR ME! MY HUSBAND GAVE ME AN INTENSE DISLIKE FOR WINE! I'LL HAVE SCOTCH!
GOOD WINE, EVEN IF I DID MAKE IT MYSELF! I'LL HAVE ANOTHER!
HELP YOURSELF, DARLING!
THROUGHOUT THE BLISSFUL EVENING, JACK DRANK THE WINE MADE FROM THE SPECIAL VINE THAT GREW FROM THE VERY SOIL IN WHICH I HAD BURIED ALPHONSE...'
...SHERRY... I I DON'T FEEL... SO GOOD!
WHY, JACK, DEAR! I DO BELIEVE YOU'RE DRUNK! HA! HA! HA!
NO... NOT DRUNK!... IT'S... THROAT... STOMACH! I'M ...I'M ON... ON FIRE!
WHY... YOU ARE SICK! HERE... LET ME HELP YOU!
7

...LEMMEE...LEMMEE OPEN MY COLLAR! FEEL SO...SO SICK! MY STOMACH! OOOHH-H!
OH, JACK, DEAR!
THE PAIN! I'M BURNING UP! SHERRY! HELP ME! SHERRY... (GASP!) SHERRY...
JACK!
I KNELT THERE IN DISBELIEF! JACK WAS DEAD! THEN SUDDENLY, I RUSHED TO THE PHONE...
OPERATOR! OPERATOR, GET ME A DOCTOR! PLEASE! HELP ME! SOMEONE HELP ME!
THE DOCTOR SAID JACK HAD BEEN POISONED... WITH CYANIDE! I COULDN'T FIGURE IT AT FIRST, BUT THEN I REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED! I HAD GIVEN ALPHONSE SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF POISON THAT WHEN HE WAS BURIED, THE GRAPEVINE ABSORBED IT THROUGH THE SOIL!
WE MADE WINE FROM THOSE POISONED GRAPES, AND WHEN JACK DRANK IT... WELL! ANYWAY, I COULDN'T EXPLAIN WITHOUT CONFESSING I'D KILLED ALPHONSE...SO THEY HAD ME! THE TRIAL WAS SHORT... I WAS FOUND GUILTY OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER!
SO HERE I AM! THEY'RE COMING FOR ME! I CAN HEAR THEM WALKING DOWN THE CORRIDOR! THEY'LL TAKE ME TO THE GAS CHAMBER! HMPF! DO YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF GAS THEY USE? CYANIDE! THAT'S THE SAME STUFF THAT I USED TO KILL ALPHONSE! ISN'T THAT A LAUGH?
THE END

OUT OF MY MIND!

MY NAME IS BETTY ANDREWS! THAT'S ME... POURING THE WINE! ON MY LEFT IS MY HUSBAND, BERT ANDREWS! LOOKS LIKE A NICE GUY, DOESN'T HE? I HATE HIM! THE BEAMING GUY ON MY RIGHT IS BERT'S BROTHER, HARVEY! THIS LITTLE DINNER PARTY IS IN HIS HONOR...
TO THE NEW HEAD OF THE STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL...A TOAST...
I'LL DRINK TO THAT!
THANKS, YOU TWO! IT WAS SWELL OF YOU TO GO TO ALL THIS TROUBLE!

NICE HAPPY LITTLE GROUP, ISN'T IT? ALL SWEETNESS AND LIGHT, EH? WELL, DON'T JUDGE BY OUTWARD APPEARANCES! I'M PLANNING TO MURDER MY HUSBAND, BERT...
BERT! YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF HELP TO ME! I REALLY OWE THIS APPOINTMENT ALL TO YOU!
NONSENSE, HARVEY! I JUST PULLED A FEW STRINGS! IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR MY 'KID BROTHER'!

SLUSHY, AREN'T THEY? I THINK IT'S *DISGUSTING!* TWO GROWN MEN ACTING LIKE ADOLESCENTS! THEY'VE BEEN LIKE THAT ALL THEIR LIVES... INSEPARABLE, DEVOTED! BERT, MY HUSBAND, IS A RICH MAN... OWNS TWO FACTORIES...

HARVEY, HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, IS AN EMINENT PSYCHIATRIST! BERT PUT HIM THROUGH SCHOOL! THEN HE PULLED STRINGS TO GET HIM THE APPOINTMENT WE'RE CELEBRATING... HEAD OF THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE...

I DON'T KNOW HOW I'LL EVER REPAY YOU, BERT!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REPAY ME, HARVEY! JUST DO A GOOD JOB IN YOUR NEW POST AND I'LL BE PROUD OF YOU!

U-U-UGH! ISN'T IT *NAUSEATING?* WELL, TIME'S A-WASTING! I HAVE TO GO INTO MY USUAL ACT! IT'S PART OF MY PLAN...

O-O-OOHH!

BETTY!

OH, NO, BETTY! *NOT AGAIN...*

I'VE BEEN PULLING THIS ROUTINE FOR THREE MONTHS, NOW! IT'LL BE WORTH IT! BERT'S GOT OVER *TWO MILLION...*

SHE'S HAVING ONE OF HER ATTACKS!

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE HER GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN! TAKE CARE OF HER, HARVEY! I'M GOING OUT...

LILY-LIVERED WEAKLING! TRYING TO *WALK OUT ON MY ACT!* I'LL SHOW HIM...

BETTY! PUT DOWN THAT *KNIFE!*

GOOD LORD!

HAH! THAT PUT A GOOD SCARE INTO HIM! AND IT STRENGTHENS MY CASE, TOO! NOW HARVEY KNOWS I CAN BE *DANGEROUS!* LOOK AT THE DEAR! LOOK HOW HE'S TRYING TO COMFORT ME! I SHOULD HAVE GONE ON THE STAGE! *I'M TERRIFIC...*

SH... SH... SHE TRIED TO *KILL ME!*

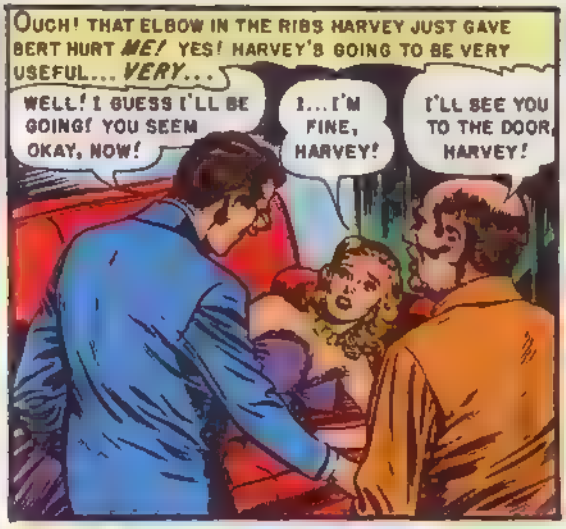
THERE... THERE BETTY! TAKE IT EASY! TAKE IT EASY! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT!

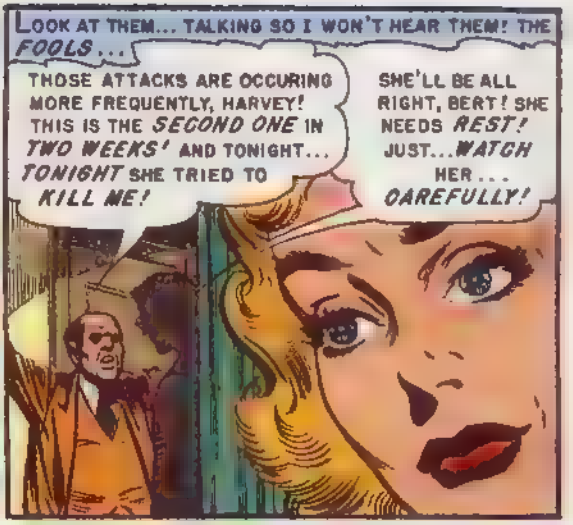
YOU SAID IT, BUSTER! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE *JUST GRAND!* I DO AWAY WITH BERT... PLEAD INSANITY WITH HARVEY TO BACK ME UP... SPEND A COUPLE OF YEARS IN THE 'NUT-HOUSE' UNDER MY BROTHER-IN-LAW'S LOVING CARE... AND THEN, GET 'CURED' AND COME OUT AND ENJOY MY TWO MILLION...

WHERE... WHERE *AM* I? WHAT *HAPPENED?*

YOU HAD ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR ATTACKS, BETTY!

YOU... YOU TRIED TO...

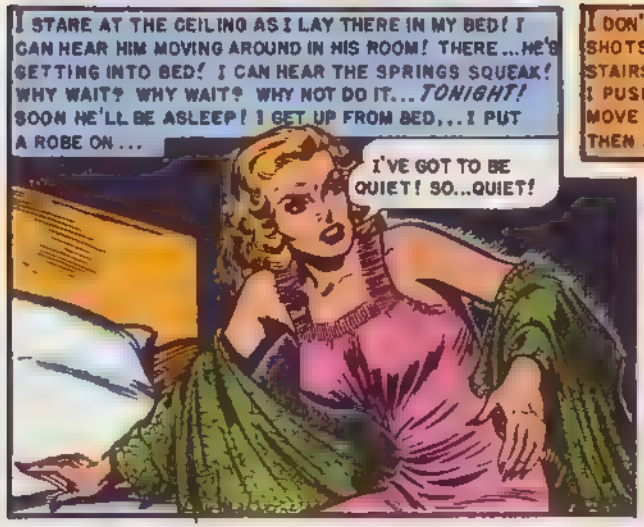

OUCH! THAT ELBOW IN THE RIBS HARVEY JUST GAVE BERT HURT ME! YES! HARVEY'S GOING TO BE VERY USEFUL... VERY...
WELL! I GUESS I'LL BE GOING! YOU SEEM OKAY, NOW!
I...I'M FINE, HARVEY!
I'LL SEE YOU TO THE DOOR, HARVEY!

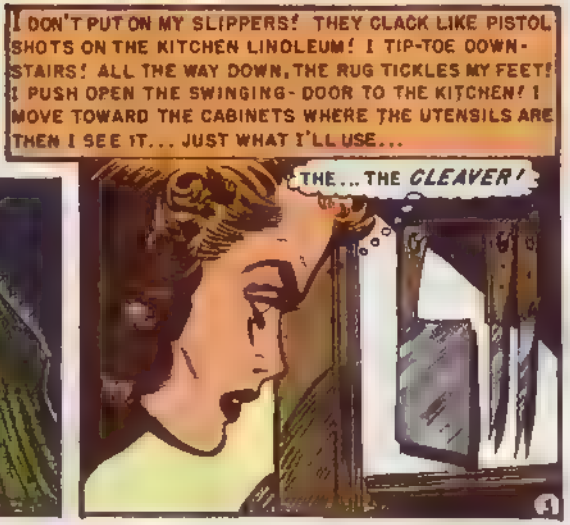

LOOK AT THEM... TALKING SO I WON'T HEAR THEM! THE FOOLS...
THOSE ATTACKS ARE OCCURING MORE FREQUENTLY, HARVEY! THIS IS THE SECOND ONE IN TWO WEEKS! AND TONIGHT... TONIGHT SHE TRIED TO KILL ME!
SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, BERT! SHE NEEDS REST! JUST...WATCH HER... CAREFULLY!

LOOK AT HIM! LOOK AT THE WAY HE LOOKS AT ME! LIKE A COCKER-SPANIEL! DO YOU BLAME ME FOR WANTING TO MURDER HIM? DO YOU? UGH! NOW HE'S TOUCHING ME WITH HIS GRIMY PAWS...
COME, BETTY! YOU MUST BE TIRED!

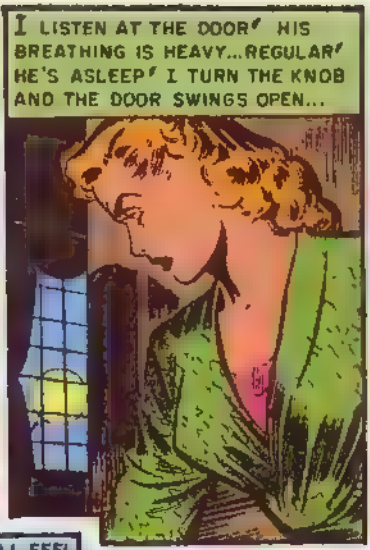
WHAT AN IDIOT! HE'S LEADING ME UPSTAIRS LIKE A CHILD! I'LL BET HE EVEN TRIES TO TUCK ME IN...
A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP IS WHAT YOU NEED!

I REALLY CAN'T WAIT TO BE FREE OF HIM! THE ONLY THING I ABHOR IS THE MURDER ITSELF! I CAN'T JUST KILL HIM! I'VE GOT TO DO IT SO IT WILL LOOK LIKE I WAS OUT OF MY MIND AT THE TIME...
GOOD NIGHT, BETTY!
G'NIGHT!


I STARE AT THE CEILING AS I LAY THERE IN MY BED! I CAN HEAR HIM MOVING AROUND IN HIS ROOM! THERE...HE'S GETTING INTO BED! I CAN HEAR THE SPRINGS SQUEAK! WHY WAIT? WHY WAIT? WHY NOT DO IT... TONIGHT! SOON HE'LL BE ASLEEP! I GET UP FROM BED...I PUT A ROBE ON...
I'VE GOT TO BE QUIET! SO...QUIET!

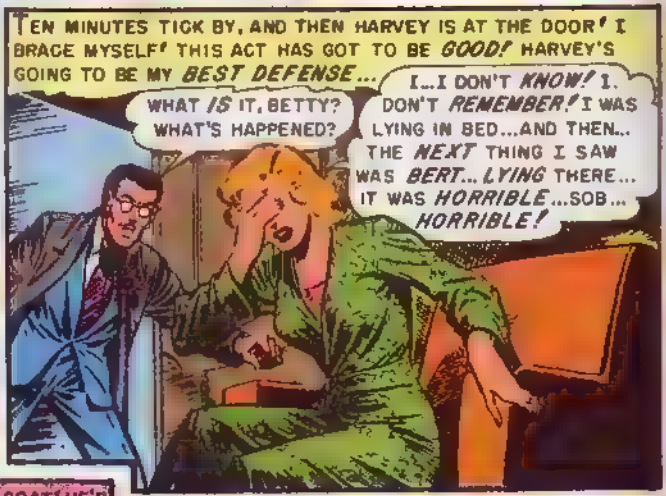

I DON'T PUT ON MY SLIPPERS! THEY CLACK LIKE PISTOL SHOTS ON THE KITCHEN LINOLEUM! I TIP-TOE DOWN-STAIRS! ALL THE WAY DOWN, THE RUG TICKLES MY FEET! I PUSH OPEN THE SWINGING-DOOR TO THE KITCHEN! I MOVE TOWARD THE CABINETS WHERE THE UTENSILS ARE THEN I SEE IT... JUST WHAT I'LL USE...
THE...THE CLEAVER!

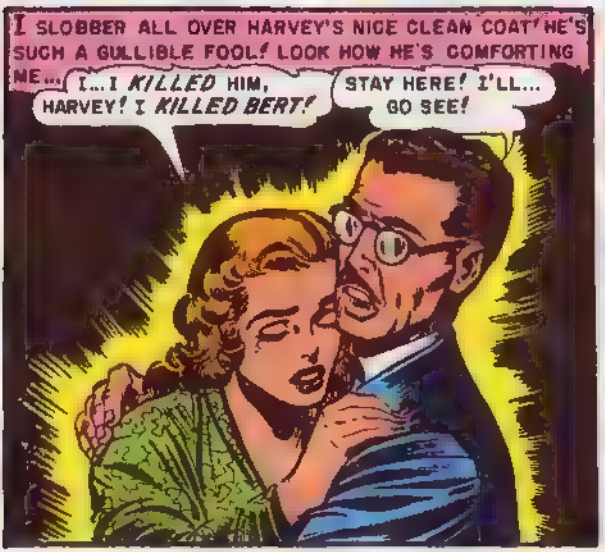
I PICK IT OFF THE HOOK! THE HANDLE IS COLD! A SHIVER RUNS DOWN MY SPINE! I START UPSTAIRS, SLOWLY . SLOWLY...


I LISTEN AT THE DOOR! HIS BREATHING IS HEAVY...REGULAR! HE'S ASLEEP! I TURN THE KNOB AND THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN...

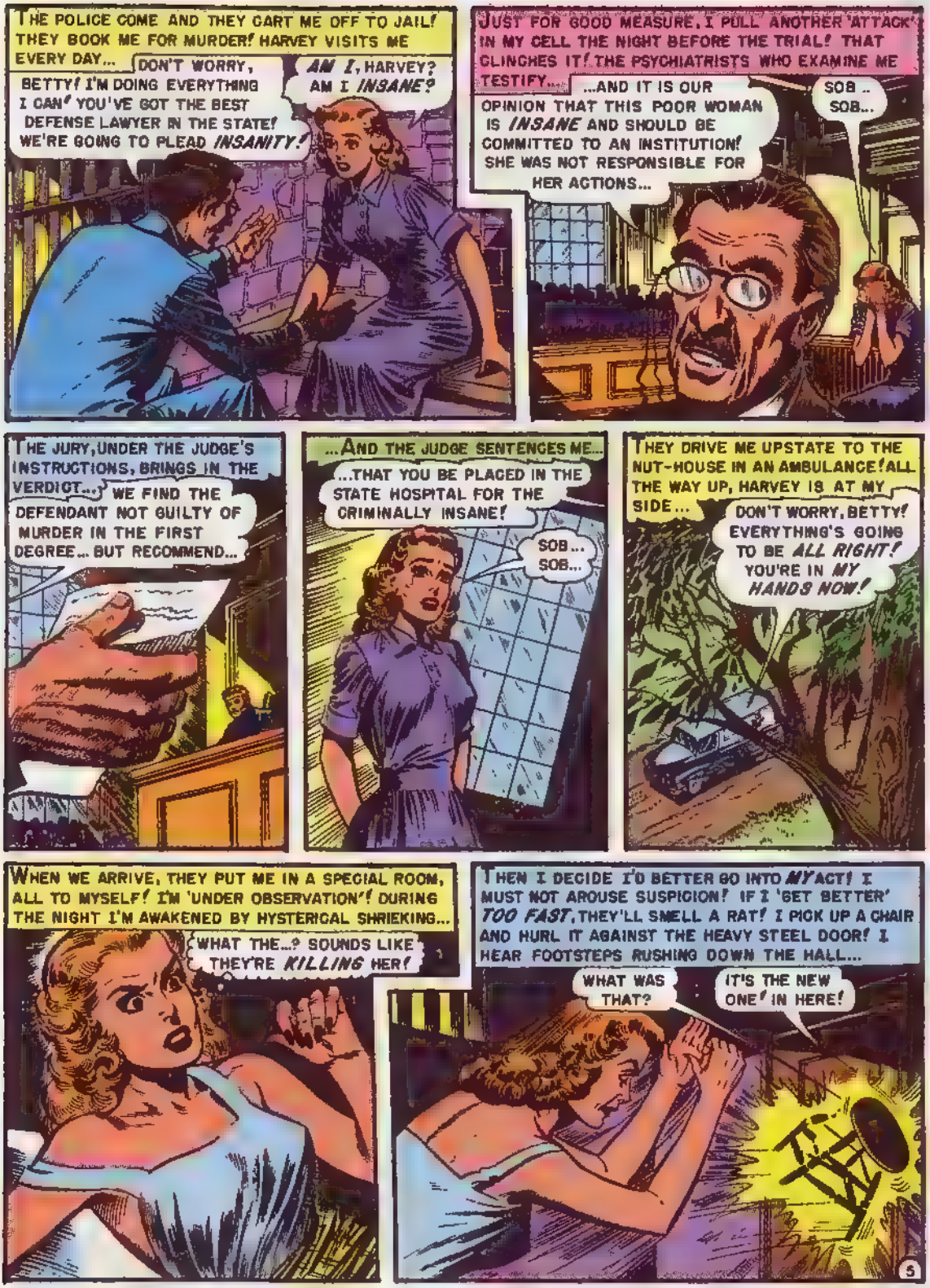
I MOVE TOWARD THE BED...RAISING THE CLEVER OVER MY HEAD! THERE'S A SMILE ON HIS FACE ... THAT DISGUSTING, SWEET, SLUSHY SMILE...

IT'S OVER AND I'M SICK! I CAN STILL FEEL THE CRUNCHING OF THE BONE... HEAR HIS SHORT GARGLED SCREAM... SEE THE BLOOD-SOPPED PILLOW! NOW, I'M DIALING THE PHONE...CALLING HARVEY...
IT'S..ME!
H-HARVEY?
BETTY! C-COME QUICKLY! I...I'VE JUST DONE SOMETHING...TERRIBLE!


TEN MINUTES TICK BY, AND THEN HARVEY IS AT THE DOOR! I BRACE MYSELF! THIS ACT HAS GOT TO BE GOOD! HARVEY'S GOING TO BE MY BEST DEFENSE...
WHAT IS IT, BETTY? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
I...I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T REMEMBER! I WAS LYING IN BED...AND THEN... THE NEXT THING I SAW WAS BERT...LYING THERE... IT WAS HORRIBLE...SOB... HORRIBLE!


I SLOBBER ALL OVER HARVEY'S NICE CLEAN COAT! HE'S SUCH A GULLIBLE FOOL! LOOK HOW HE'S COMFORTING ME...
I...I KILLED HIM, HARVEY! I KILLED BERT!
STAY HERE! I'LL... GO SEE!

HARVEY DARTS UP THE STAIRS TO BERT'S ROOM! WHEN HE COMES DOWN, HE'S WHITE AS A SHEET! I REALLY CAN'T BLAME HIM! IT'S A PRETTY GORY SIGHT...
I...I DON'T REMEMBER DOING IT, HARVEY! I REALLY DON'T! YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME!
I.. I'D BETTER CALL THE POLICE, BETTY!


THE POLICE COME AND THEY CART ME OFF TO JAIL! THEY BOOK ME FOR MURDER! HARVEY VISITS ME EVERY DAY...
DON'T WORRY, BETTY! I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN! YOU'VE GOT THE BEST DEFENSE LAWYER IN THE STATE! WE'RE GOING TO PLEAD INSANITY!
AM I, HARVEY? AM I INSANE?
JUST FOR GOOD MEASURE, I PULL ANOTHER 'ATTACK' IN MY CELL THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TRIAL! THAT CLINCHES IT! THE PSYCHIATRISTS WHO EXAMINE ME TESTIFY...
...AND IT IS OUR OPINION THAT THIS POOR WOMAN IS INSANE AND SHOULD BE COMMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION! SHE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HER ACTIONS...
SOB .. SOB...
THE JURY, UNDER THE JUDGE'S INSTRUCTIONS, BRINGS IN THE VERDICT...
WE FIND THE DEFENDANT NOT GUILTY OF MURDER IN THE FIRST DEGREE... BUT RECOMMEND...
...AND THE JUDGE SENTENCES ME...
...THAT YOU BE PLACED IN THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE!
SOB... SOB...
THEY DRIVE ME UPSTATE TO THE NUT-HOUSE IN AN AMBULANCE! ALL THE WAY UP, HARVEY IS AT MY SIDE...
DON'T WORRY, BETTY! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT! YOU'RE IN MY HANDS NOW!
WHEN WE ARRIVE, THEY PUT ME IN A SPECIAL ROOM, ALL TO MYSELF! I'M 'UNDER OBSERVATION'! DURING THE NIGHT I'M AWAKENED BY HYSTERICAL SHRIEKING...
WHAT THE...? SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE KILLING HER!
THEN I DECIDE I'D BETTER GO INTO MY ACT! I MUST NOT AROUSE SUSPICION! IF I 'GET BETTER' TOO FAST, THEY'LL SMELL A RAT! I PICK UP A CHAIR AND HURL IT AGAINST THE HEAVY STEEL DOOR! I HEAR FOOTSTEPS RUSHING DOWN THE HALL...
WHAT WAS THAT?
IT'S THE NEW ONE! IN HERE!
5

I SCREAM AND JUMP AT THE MATRON AS SHE COMES IN! I CLUTCH AT HER HAIR...TEAR AT HER FACE WITH MY NAILS! SHE GRABS ME IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP! I'M HELPLESS! WHAT AN OX!

WE'D BETTER PUT THIS ONE IN A *RESTRAINER!*

YEAH!

RESTRAINER! SHE CALLS IT! *A STRAIGHT JACKET!* THEY TRUSS ME UP IN THE THING AND THROW ME ON THE COT! I CAN'T MOVE! I'M HELPLESS! I BEGIN TO LAUGH...

HA HA HA HA

WHAT A SILLY WAY TO MAKE TWO MILLION BUCKS!

THE NEXT MORNING, THEY GIVE ME A 'TREATMENT'...

P-P-PLEASE! L-L-LET ME OUT!

COLD, HONEY? YOU'LL GET USED TO IT!

THEN AN EXAMINATION! THEY ASK ME A BUNCH OF QUESTIONS! WHAT A LAUGH! I ANSWER THEM ALL WRONG...

GET DOCTOR ANDREWS! I WANT TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT THIS GIRL!

HARVEY ANDREWS? HE'S MY BROTHER-IN-LAW! HE'S MY BROTHER-IN-LAW! HE'S MY BROTHER-IN-LAW! HE'S...

SHH!

HARVEY COMES IN AND I FLING MYSELF IN HIS ARMS...

HARVEY! HELP ME! THEY'RE TRYING TO HURT ME! LAST NIGHT...THEY TIED ME UP IN A STRAIGHT JACKET!

THERE, THERE, BETTY! I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU! DON'T WORRY!

HARVEY AND THE DOCTOR WHO HAD EXAMINED ME GO OFF IN A CORNER AND WHISPER! I WATCH THEM! I SEE HARVEY'S FACE REDDEN...THEN HE BLOWS UP...

NO! I'M IN CHARGE HERE! WHAT *I* SAY *GOES!* YOU'LL FOLLOW *MY* ORDERS ON THIS PATIENT... UNDERSTAND?

YES, SIR!

THEY'VE PUT ME IN A ROOM! IT'S A BIG ROOM WITH NO FURNITURE... NOTHING! JUST WALLS! THERE ARE OTHER WOMEN HERE! SOME OF THEM TALK AMONG THEMSELVES! OTHERS SIT ON THE FLOOR STARING AT NOTHING! ONE CHANTS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE! ANOTHER IS LAUGHING CONTINUOUSLY...LAUGHING ...LAUGHING...

U-U-UGH! THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

TONIGHT THEY PUT ME IN A WARD! THE BEDS ARE LINED UP ONE AFTER THE OTHER! I TRY TO SLEEP BUT I CAN'T! AT ONE END OF THE ROOM, A WOMAN IS RAVING! NEAR ME, SOMEONE GIGGLES INTERMITTENTLY! ACROSS, A YOUNG GIRL STARES AT ME WILD-EYED...

I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

I DASH UP THE AISLE AND THROUGH THE SWINGING DOORS AT THE END OF THE WARD! A MATRON CATCHES ME AS I RUN DOWN THE HALL...

WHERE ARE *YOU* GOING?

I...I...

I PULL ANOTHER 'ATTACK'! MAYBE THEY'LL PUT ME IN SOLITARY AND I'LL HAVE SOME PEACE! ANOTHER MATRON COMES ALONG AND THEY DRAG ME INTO A DARK ROOM...

SHE'S HAVING ANOTHER ATTACK!

DOCTOR ANDREWS SAID TO GIVE HER A BATH IF SHE DOES!

THEY STRIP ME AND TIE ME IN A TUB! THEY COVER IT WITH CANVAS SO ONLY MY HEAD SHOWS! THE JET OF WATER IS FREEZING! I SCREAM...

EEEEEEEEEEE!

CALM DOWN HONEY! THE SOONER YOU DO, THE QUICKER IT'LL BE OVER!

HARVEY COMES IN! HE SMILES DOWN AT ME...

HARVEY! I'VE GOT TO *TALK* TO YOU! SEND THEM AWAY! IT...IT'S *PRIVATE!*

ALL RIGHT, NURSE!

I BEGIN TO CRY! I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF ANY LONGER...

HARVEY! YOU'VE GOT TO GET ME OUT OF HERE! I'LL *REALLY* GO MAD IF YOU DON'T! I...I'M *NOT INSANE*, HARVEY! I *FAKED* THOSE *ATTACKS!* ALL OF THEM! I *KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING* WHEN I KILLED BERT!

I *KNOW*, BETTY! *I KNOW YOU'RE SANE! I'VE KNOWN IT SINCE THE NIGHT YOU MURDERED BERT!*

HARVEY GOES TO THE DOOR AND BECKONS TO THE WAITING MATRON...

NURSE! YOU CAN FINISH UP, NOW! I'M AFRAID THIS WOMAN IS GOING TO BE WITH US FOR A LONG, LONG TIME! SHE'S COMPLETELY *OUT OF HER MIND!*

THE END

AIR-TIGHT!

The plan was air-tight, Grady knew. He had so thoroughly "cased" the bank that walking off with all the cash was a SNAP! Sitting here in the vault, with the money he was going to steal stacked neatly around him, Grady laughed aloud. He had planned this job painstakingly...with intense regard for minute details! Robbing the Land National Bank, Grady reflected, was an airtight venture!

First, there had been his incessant observation of the establishment's daily routine. With exacting care he had discovered . . . had checked and rechecked . . . the fact that the burly guard was off duty every Thursday morning, not reporting for work until noontime. And on that one day of the week . . . Thursday . . . only Mr. Clauson, the elderly Cashier, was present when the vault was automatically opened by the complex time-lock. At 8:00 each and every morning, Grady knew, those massive steel vault doors opened and Mr. Clauson ventured into the room. This time there would be a surprise in store for old Clauson . . . for as soon as the doors rolled open Grady would be darting out of the steel-lined room with $250,000 in cash!

Renting a safety deposit box had been an inspiration! For, by visiting that inner room on the pretext of business, Grady had been able to note dimensions, and compute the amount of oxygen which it held. The result of this information was the knowledge that if he hid inside the vault at 5:00 in the afternoon, when the doors closed, he would be able to survive the night. When the doors opened at 8:00 the following morning, there would still be oxygen left . . . and that would be about all that remained after Grady's exit!

He glanced nervously at his watch. It was just a few minutes before eight: he had remained huddled here in the vault for almost 15 hours. He turned and stared intently at the door . . . it would be gliding open in just another minute.

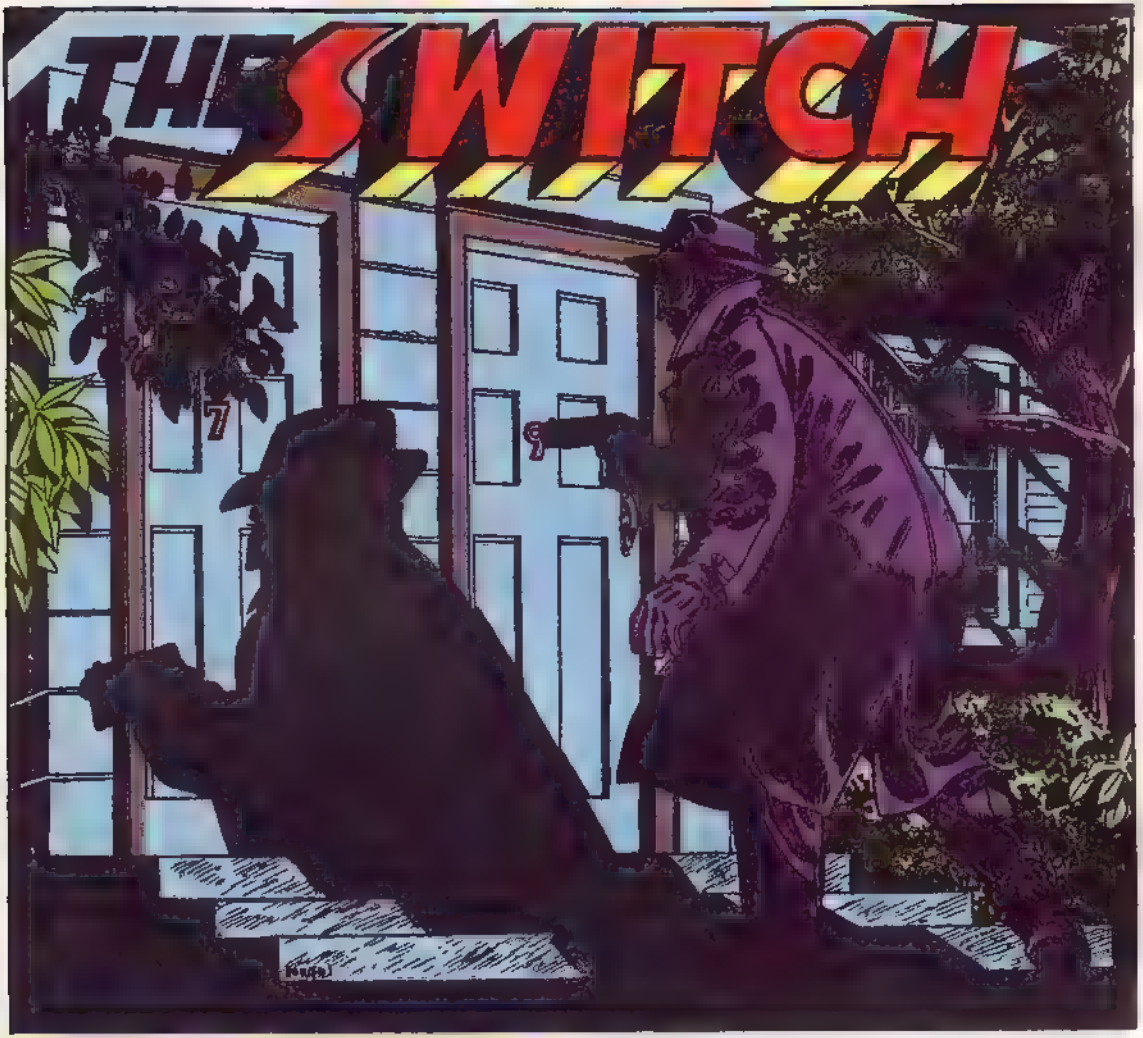
But something had gone wrong . . . astonishingly wrong! For it was 8:15 . . . 8:30 . . . and still the door remained tightly shut! He began to cough, and with dread remembered that only enough air was stored in the vault each night to last until 9:00 the next morning! And the hands of his watch indicated 8:45!

His lungs were burning now . . . his fingers clawed savagely at the smooth steel walls . . . his screeches for help echoed grotesquely in that airless chamber! Something had gone disastrously wrong, Grady thought dumbly, through the choking, searing haze. It was *9:00* . . . and the doors should have opened an hour ago . . .

Then he knew: his airtight plan had led him to an airtight doom. All of his calculations had left out one point . . . he had entered that chamber on the twenty-first of February . . . today was WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY! The bank would be closed for another 24 hours . . .

The death rattle rebounded horribly off the walls, and Grady writhed on the floor, scratching like a demented beast at his throat, his chest . . . but there was no air left!

THE SWITCH



EDWIN LAMBERT SLAMMED THE DOOR OF HIS GARDEN APARTMENT AND SIGHED! HE FILLED HIS LUNGS WITH THE BRISK MORNING AIR AND GLANCED OVER AT THE DOOR OF THE APARTMENT ADJOINING HIS! EDWIN WONDERED IF THE CROSBYS HAD HEARD THE ARGUMENT HE HAD JUST HAD WITH HIS WIFE! THE WALLS WERE SO THIN..

NAG, NAG, NAG! THAT'S ALL SHE EVER DOES!

EDWIN LAMBERT LIVED WITH HIS WIFE, ELSA, IN NUMBER 9, BEACH ROAD! HIS NEIGHBORS, THE CROSBYS, LIVED IN THE ATTACHED APARTMENT, NUMBER 7! IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE METAL NUMBERS ON THE DOORS, YOU COULD HARDLY TELL THE HOUSES APART.

GUESS I'LL TAKE IN A *MOVIE* TONIGHT! WITH ELSA *SORE* AT ME *AGAIN*, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I *DIDN'T* COME HOME TILL *LATE*!

IT WAS AFTER TWELVE WHEN EDWIN CAME UP THE WALK THAT LED TO NUMBERS 7 AND 9 BEACH ROAD! AS HE STOOD BEFORE HIS DOOR, NUMBER 9, FUMBLING FOR HIS KEYS, HE HEARD VOICES COMING FROM THE CROSBYS' APARTMENT...
YUH GOT A PICTURE OF YER WIFE, SO MY BOY'LL KNOW WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE?
EDWIN EDGED CLOSER TO THE CROSBY'S' DOOR, LISTENING...
NO! I HAVEN'T ANY!
WELL, HOW'LL HE KNOW HE'S BUMPIN' OFF THE RIGHT DAME?
HE'LL KNOW! SHE'LL BE ALONE IN THE APARTMENT! I'LL ARRANGE IT! REMEMBER! IT'S NUMBER 7! DON'T MAKE A MISTAKE!
DON'T WORRY! THURSDAY NIGHT... NINE O'CLOCK! RIGHT?
EDWIN LAMBERT GASPED! HE COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EARS...
WHY..THAT'S HARRY CROSBY! I RECOGNIZE HIS VOICE! HE.. HE'S ARRANGING TO HAVE HIS WIFE.. MURDERED!
HERE'S THE MONEY! ONE THOUSAND... CORRECT?
EDWIN SLIPPED INTO HIS APARTMENT AS THE DOOR TO NUMBER 7 OPENED...
GOOD NIGHT!
GOOD NIGHT! DON'T WORRY, MR. CROSBY! MY BOY'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING!
INSIDE NUMBER 9, EDWIN BREATHED HEAVILY...
I..I NEVER KNEW! HOW EASY HOW EASY!
IS THAT YOU, EDWIN?
ELSA, EDWIN'S WIFE, APPEARED AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS! HER FACE WAS FLUSHED WITH ANGER...
YES, ELSA! IT'S ME!
WHERE WERE YOU TILL NOW? THE LEAST YOU COULD DO WAS TELEPHONE! THE NERVE OF YOU... STAYING OUT ALL NIGHT, WHILE I SIT HOME...
2

AFTER AN HOUR, ELSA'S SHRIEKING AND SCREAMING CEASED... AND SHE STORMED UPSTAIRS TO BED, HER RAGE SPENT! EDWIN SAT EXHAUSTED IN A CHAIR...
I HATE HER! HATE HER! IF I HAD A THOUSAND DOLLARS, I'D HAVE HER KILLED, TOO!
EDWIN LIT HIS PIPE AND PUFFED IT THOUGHTFULLY! SUDDENLY AN IDEA CAME TO HIM... A PLAN TO GET RID OF HIS NAGGING WIFE, ELSA, ONCE AND FOR ALL...
IT CAN WORK! YES! IT WILL WORK! THOSE KILLERS WILL MURDER ELSA INSTEAD!
THE NEXT MORNING WAS WEDNESDAY! EDWIN WAS SILENT AT BREAKFAST! HE WAS BUSY WITH HIS THOUGHTS... PLANNING...
WELL? AREN'T YOU GOING TO SAY SOMETHING? ARE YOU GOING TO SIT LIKE A CLAM ALL MORNING?
I... I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY, ELSA!
ELSA'S EYES BULGED! HER FACE REDDENED...
WELL, I DO, EDWIN LAMBERT! I HAVE PLENTY TO SAY! WHY I EVER MARRIED YOU IS BEYOND ME! YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT MAKE ME GROW OLD BEFORE MY TIME! I HATE YOU, EDWIN LAMBERT! HATE YOU! I... SIT STILL AND LISTEN!
EDWIN GOT UP FROM THE BREAKFAST TABLE AND TOOK HIS HAT! HE SLAMMED THE APARTMENT DOOR ON ELSA'S RAVING...
I'VE GOT TO DO IT! I'VE GOT TO... BEFORE SHE DRIVES ME CRAZY!
SUDDENLY THE DOOR TO NUMBER 7 OPENED, AND HARRY CROSBY CAME OUT! HE HAD A SUITCASE IN HIS HAND...
GOOD-BYE, DEAR! BE BACK FRIDAY!
GOOD-BYE, HARRY! TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!
REMEMBER, DEAR! I'LL CALL YOU LONG DISTANCE THURSDAY NIGHT! LET YOU KNOW HOW I AM! NINE O'CLOCK!
I'LL BE WAITING, HARRY!
3

EDWIN CHUCKLED! HARRY WAS PRETTY CLEVER ' HE WAS SETTING UP A GOOD ALIBI! HE'D BE OUT OF TOWN WHEN THEY CAME TO MURDER HIS WIFE! AND BY PROMISING TO CALL AT NINE O'CLOCK ON THURSDAY NIGHT, HE WAS MAKING SURE THAT HIS WIFE WOULD BE HOME TO RECEIVE THEM...

'MORNING HARRY!

GOOD MORNING, EDWIN!

GOING OUT OF TOWN, I SEE!

YEP! TILL FRIDAY! BUSINESS, YOU KNOW! WANT A LIFT TO THE STATION?

THAT AFTERNOON, WHEN EDWIN CAME HOME FROM WORK, HE WALKED UP THE PATH TO THE TWO DOORS AND STOPPED! HE SEEMED TO BE THINKING FOR A MOMENT! THEN HE WENT UP TO THE DOOR WITH THE 7 ON IT, AND RANG THE BELL...

WHY, MR. LAMBERT!

MRS. CROSBY! A TERRIBLE THING HAS HAPPENED! I... I LEFT AN IMPORTANT ENVELOPE IN MR. CROSBY'S CAR THIS MORNING!

BUT MR. CROSBY'S GONE OUT OF TOWN WITH THE CAR! HE WON'T BE BACK UNTIL FRIDAY!

OH, DEAR! I HOPE IT DOESN'T GET LOST OR THROWN AWAY!

MY HUSBAND IS CALLING ME TOMORROW AT NINE! IF YOU LIKE, I'LL TELL HIM ABOUT IT!

IF YOU DON'T MIND, MRS. CROSBY, I'D LIKE TO COME IN AND TALK TO HIM MYSELF! I CAN DESCRIBE IT!

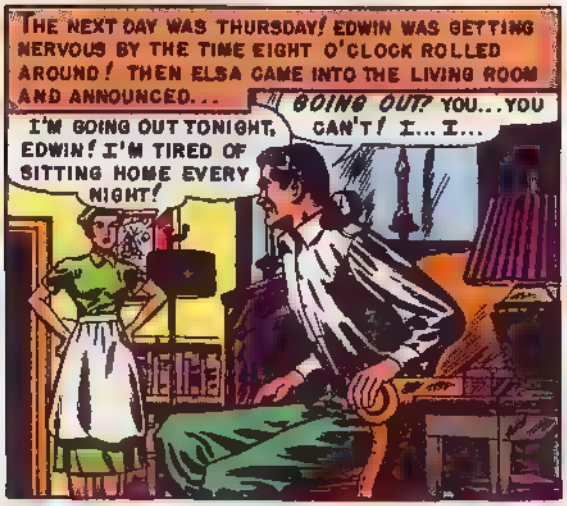
OF COURSE!

GOOD! THEN I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW NIGHT AT NINE!

EDWIN LEFT THE CROSBY HOME AND ENTERED HIS OWN! HE GRITTED HIS TEETH AND WAITED FOR ELSA'S ONSLAUGHT...

ONLY ONE MORE DAY! I CAN TAKE IT!

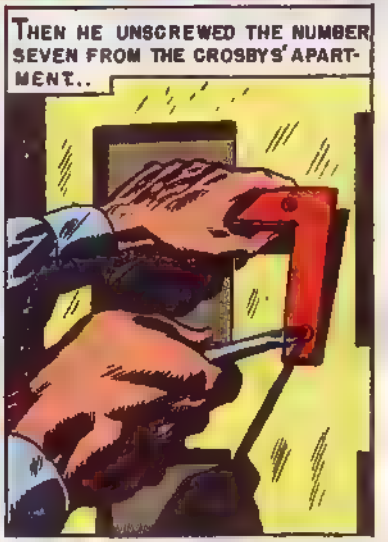
EDWIN! IS THAT YOU...?

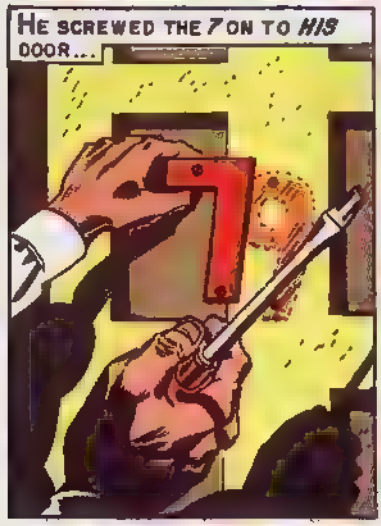

THE NEXT DAY WAS THURSDAY! EDWIN WAS GETTING NERVOUS BY THE TIME EIGHT O'CLOCK ROLLED AROUND! THEN ELSA CAME INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND ANNOUNCED...
I'M GOING OUT TONIGHT, EDWIN! I'M TIRED OF SITTING HOME EVERY NIGHT!
GOING OUT? YOU...YOU CAN'T! I... I...

OH CAN'T I? WELL I AM! I'M LEAVING AT NINE-FIFTEEN! I WANT YOU TO STAY AND WATCH A POT I HAVE ON THE STOVE! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
Y...YES, ELSA!

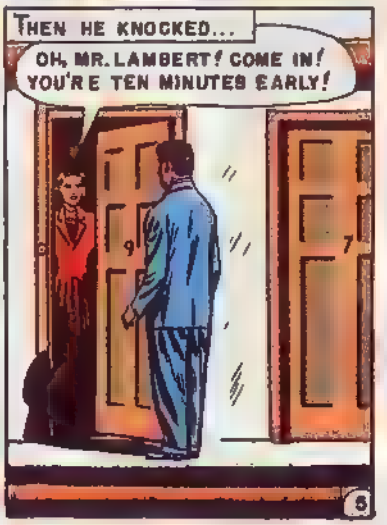
ELSA STAMPED UPSTAIRS TO GET DRESSED AND EDWIN BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF! HIS PLAN HAD ALMOST EXPLODED! HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH! IT WAS EIGHT-FORTY FIVE...
IT'S TIME...

EDWIN WENT OUTSIDE! FROM HIS POCKET, HE DREW A SCREW DRIVER! CAREFULLY, HE UNSCREWED THE NUMBER 9 FROM HIS APARTMENT DOOR...


THEN HE UNSCREWED THE NUMBER SEVEN FROM THE CROSBYS' APARTMENT...


HE SCREWED THE 7 ON TO HIS DOOR...

...AND THE 9 ON TO THE CROSBYS'...


THEN HE KNOCKED...
OH, MR. LAMBERT! COME IN! YOU'RE TEN MINUTES EARLY!

AT NINE O'CLOCK, A SURPRISED ELSA LAMBERT LOOKED INTO THE MUZZLE OF A FORTY-FIVE! SHE WATCHED HORRIFIED AS THE GRIM-FACED STRANGER'S FINGER TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER! THE EXPLOSION ROCKED THE THIN SEPARATING WALL BETWEEN THE TWO APARTMENTS...
WHAT WAS THAT? IT SOUNDED LIKE A SHOT!
IT WAS...NOTHING, MRS. CROSBY! JUST A CAR BACKFIRING OUT ON THE STREET!
EDWIN SMILED TO HIMSELF! HIS PLAN HAD WORKED! THE KILLER HAD GONE TO 'NUMBER 7' AND DONE HIS JOB! ELSA WAS DEAD!
FUNNY! HARRY PROMISED TO CALL!
I'LL WAIT, MRS. CROSBY!
OF COURSE EDWIN WOULD WAIT! MRS. CROSBY WAS HIS ALIBI! SOMEONE HAD KILLED ELSA WHILE HE AND MRS. CROSBY WERE IN HER HOUSE FROM TEN OF NINE ON! IT WAS PERFECT...
CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING, MR. LAMBERT?
WHY, A GLASS OF BEER'D DO NICELY!
MRS. CROSBY STOOD UP..
THERE ARE SOME CANS OF BEER IN THE CELLAR! I'LL GET YOU SOME!
THAT'S AWFULLY NICE OF YOU, MRS. CROSBY!
MRS. CROSBY DISAPPEARED INTO THE KITCHEN AND EDWIN HEARD HER GO DOWN THE CELLAR STEPS! HE BEGAN TO LAUGH! SUDDENLY, THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN! A MAN STOOD IN THE DOORWAY . A GUN IN HIS HAND...
W...W...WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'RE EDWIN LAMBERT, AIN'TCHA? YOUR WIFE HIRED ME TO BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT!
SO THAT'S WHY ELSA WAS GOING OUT TONIGHT! THAT'S WHY SHE LEFT ORDERS FOR EDWIN TO STAY HOME AND WATCH THE COOKING...
NO! WAIT! YOU'RE IN THE WRONG APARTMENT! I'M... CROSBY...HARRY CROSBY! THE LAMBERTS LIVE NEXT DOOR!
NUMBER NINE! DAT'S WHAT SHE TOLD ME! NUMBER NINE... SEE?
9
THE SHOT ECHOED THROUGH THE CROSBY'S APARTMENT! EDWIN SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR! THE THUG STOOD OVER HIM...
S'MATTER, WISE GUY? YUH THINK I CAN'T READ? NUMBER NINE, SHE SAYS! NUMBER NINE IT IS!
9
WHAT'S THAT THE POET SAID? THAT THE BEST-LAID PLANS OF MICE AND MEN OFT' GO ASTRAY? POOR EDWIN AND ELSA LAMBERT! THEIR PLANS WENT DEAD WRONG! AND JUST WAIT TILL HARRY CROSBY COMES HOME! WILL HE BE SURPRISED! HE'LL HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN!
-THE END-

THE HAUNT OF FEAR

HEE, HEE! WELL, BUBBLE MY CAULDRON! I SEE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO DO ANOTHER 'GUEST-SPOT'. SO HERE GOES! YEP! IT'S *ME* AGAIN! *THE OLD WITCH*, MISTRESS OF *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* THIS TIME I HAVE A CHILLING LITTLE TALE COOKING, A TALE OF LEGAL ENTANGLEMENTS THAT FINALLY GET... AHEM... STRAIGHTENED OUT! I CALL THIS TEMPTING LITTLE DISH...

JURY DUTY!

MY STORY BEGINS IN A PRISON COURTYARD! AS THE LAST FLICKERING STAR FADES IN THE MORNING SKY WITH THE COMING OF DAWN, A SMALL DOOR AT ONE END OF THE COURTYARD OPENS! A FIGURE EMERGES, FLANKED BY TWO UNIFORMED GUARDS! BEFORE THEM, SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE GREY SKY, STANDS A SILENT, CRUDELY-HEWN GALLOWS...

SLOWLY, HESITANTLY, THE CONDEMNED MAN APPROACHES THE LETHAL STRUCTURE, PRODDED ONWARD BY THE TWO GUARDS...
THE HANGMAN ON THE SCAFFOLD WATCHES, GRIM-FACED, AS THE PRISONER MOUNTS THE STAIRS! AT A SIGNAL FROM THE PRISON WARDEN, THE HANGMAN STEPS FORWARD AND CAREFULLY BLINDFOLDS THE DOOMED MAN...
THE HEAVY ROPE WITH ITS TRADITIONAL THIRTEEN COILS IS SLIPPED AROUND HIS NECK...
THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE AS THE CONDEMNED MAN STANDS STIFFLY...WAITING! THEN, WITH AN ECHOING REPORT, THE TRAP DOOR IN THE SCAFFOLD FALLS...
THE ROPE SUDDENLY TIGHTENS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE PLUNGING BODY...
SOON, ALL THAT MARS THE SILENCE OF THE PRISON YARD IS THE CREAKING OF THE ROPE, AS THE BODY OF THE HANGED MAN SWAYS IN THE BRISK MORNING BREEZE...
ALL RIGHT! YOU CAN CUT HIM DOWN NOW! DOC? WILL YOU...?
YES!
THE ROPE IS CUT, AND THE BODY DROPS WITH A DULL THUD TO THE STONE FLOOR OF THE COURT! THE DOCTOR STEPS FORWARD...BRIEFLY EXAMINES THE EXECUTED PRISONER... AND ANNOUNCES...
I PRONOUNCE THIS MAN DEAD!
ALL RIGHT, GUARD! IF THERE'S ANYONE HERE TO CLAIM HIS BODY, THEY MAY DO SO!

PETER KARDOFF'S BODY IS PLACED IN A PINE BOX AND LIFTED ONTO A CART! HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT, BORIS, HAULS IT AWAY...

YOUR GRAVE IS WAITING, MASTER! ALL NIGHT I HAVE DUG...AND NOW...IT WAITS!

THE WHEELS OF THE CART CLATTER DOWN THE COBBLESTONE STREETS! THE DIN ECHOES FROM THE FACES OF THE SILENT SLEEPING BUILDINGS! SUDDENLY, AS BORIS TURNS INTO A DESERTED STREET...

MO-O-A-N-N-N!

MASTER! YOU... LIVE!

WELL! HEE, HEE! THAT'S A GRUESOME ENOUGH BEGINNING, ISN'T IT? *PETER KARDOFF*, CONDEMNED MURDERER, IS *HANGED!* THE DOCTOR PRONOUNCES HIM *DEAD!* HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT, *BORIS*, CLAIMS HIS BODY FOR *BURIAL!* AND... AS HE CARTS THE CORPSE THROUGH THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT...HE HEARS A *MOAN!* NICE? WELL, *GO ON!* YOU AIN'T SEEN *NUTHIN'*, YET!

ABOUT TWO MONTHS LATER, FELIX BARNES, KARDOFF'S DEFENSE LAWYER, RECEIVES A VISITOR...

BORIS! HOW ARE YOU?

YOU COME... WITH ME!

BARNES FOLLOWS BORIS THROUGH DARKENED STREETS TO PETER KARDOFF'S HOUSE...

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, BORIS?

YOU... SEE!

BORIS UNLOCKS THE SQUEEKY, BATTERED DOOR AND USHERS FELIX BARNES INTO THE HOUSE! HE LEADS HIM UP COB-WEBBED STAIRS...

MASTER...WAITS FOR YOU...IN HERE!

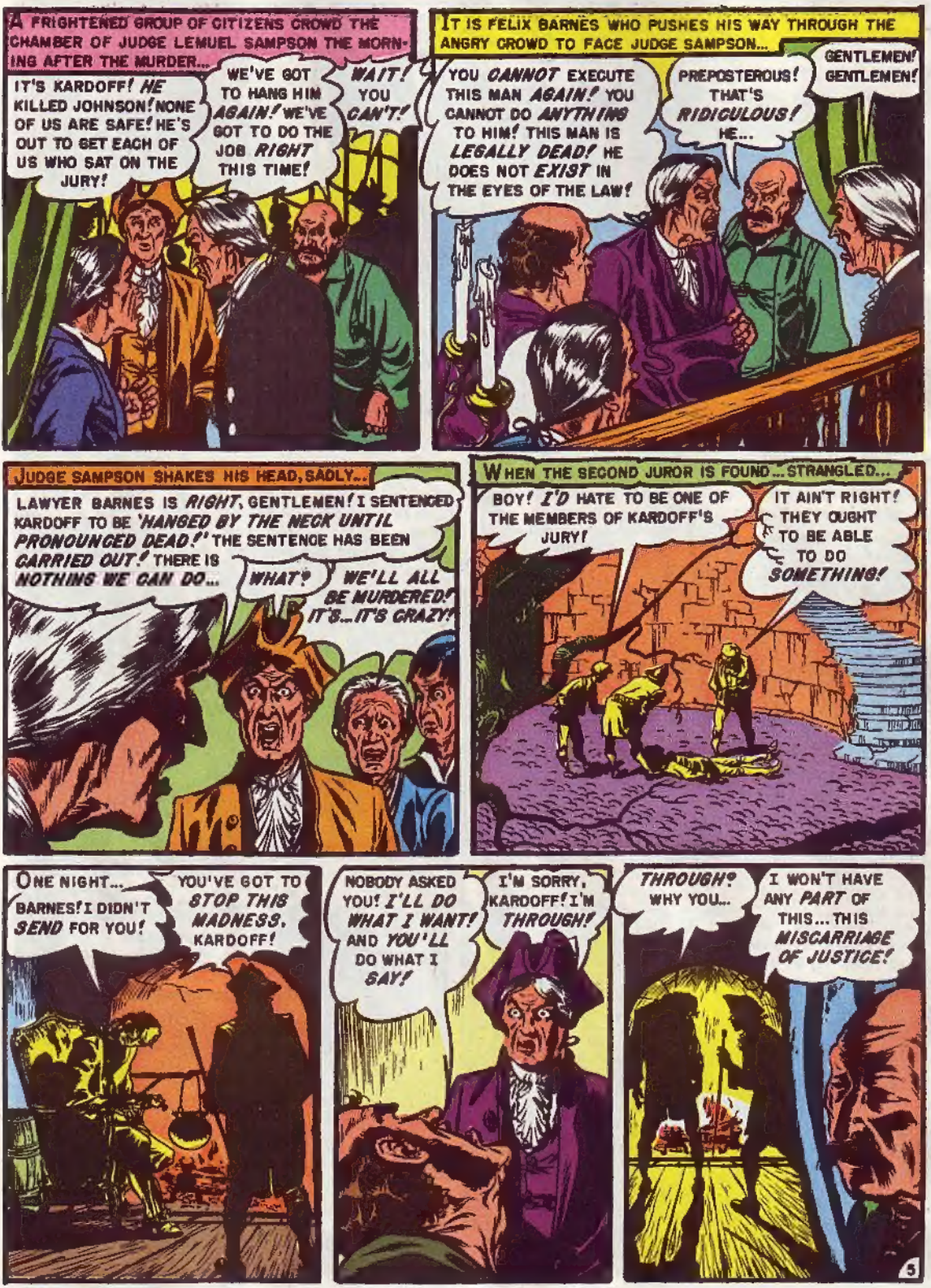
YOUR *MASTER!* WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? KARDOFF WAS *HUNG* TWO MONTHS AGO!

BORIS STEPS ASIDE AND BARNES ENTERS THE DIMLY LIT ROOM! SUDDENLY, HIS EYES OPEN WIDE! HE STARES DUMBFOUNDED AT...

KARDOFF! YOU...YOU...

YES, FELIX! I AM *ALIVE!*

PETER KARDOFF GRINS EVILY AT THE SPEECHLESS LAWYER! HE SITS IN A DUSTY MOTH-EATEN CHAIR...HIS HEAD TWISTED GROTESQUELY ON HIS STOOPED SHOULDERS...
SURPRISED, BARNES?
I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT YOU WERE...
DEAD? HEH,HEH! YES! THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL THINK! BUT, I DIDN'T DIE! MY NECK WAS BROKEN, BUT THE SPINAL CORD WASN'T SEVERED! NO, BARNES! THEY HUNG ME BUT I DID NOT DIE!
WHAT...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
REVENGE, BARNES! I WANT REVENGE ON THOSE WHO CONDEMNED ME TO DEATH!
YOU'RE MAD, KARDOFF! THEY'LL HANG YOU AGAIN!
CAN THEY, MY FINE LAWYER FRIEND? CAN THEY EXECUTE A MAN WHO HAS BEEN DECLARED LEGALLY DEAD?
WHY, I...I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T SEE HOW...
THANK YOU! THAT'S ALL I WANT TO KNOW! YOU WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE MY USUAL RETAINER! FOR THIS FEE, YOU WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROMULGATE THAT FACT...THAT I AM LEGALLY DEAD!
AND SO, WHEN PETER KARDOFF REAPPEARS ONCE MORE ON THE STREETS OF THE TOWN...
KARDOFF!
IT'S HIS GHOST!
NO! HE'S ALIVE!
LOOK AT HIS NECK...
AND WHEN THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY THAT FOUND PETER KARDOFF GUILTY OF MURDER IS DISCOVERED STRANGLED...
KARDOFF! HE DID THIS!
HE'S OUT FOR REVENGE!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!


A FRIGHTENED GROUP OF CITIZENS CROWD THE CHAMBER OF JUDGE LEMUEL SAMPSON THE MORNING AFTER THE MURDER...
IT'S KARDOFF! HE KILLED JOHNSON! NONE OF US ARE SAFE! HE'S OUT TO GET EACH OF US WHO SAT ON THE JURY!
WE'VE GOT TO HANG HIM AGAIN! WE'VE GOT TO DO THE JOB RIGHT THIS TIME!
WAIT! YOU CAN'T!
IT IS FELIX BARNES WHO PUSHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE ANGRY CROWD TO FACE JUDGE SAMPSON...
YOU CANNOT EXECUTE THIS MAN AGAIN! YOU CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO HIM! THIS MAN IS LEGALLY DEAD! HE DOES NOT EXIST IN THE EYES OF THE LAW!
PREPOSTEROUS! THAT'S RIDICULOUS! HE...
GENTLEMEN! GENTLEMEN!
JUDGE SAMPSON SHAKES HIS HEAD, SADLY...
LAWYER BARNES IS RIGHT, GENTLEMEN! I SENTENCED KARDOFF TO BE 'HANGED BY THE NECK UNTIL PRONOUNCED DEAD!' THE SENTENCE HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT! THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO...
WHAT?
WE'LL ALL BE MURDERED! IT'S... IT'S CRAZY!
WHEN THE SECOND JUROR IS FOUND... STRANGLED...
BOY! I'D HATE TO BE ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF KARDOFF'S JURY!
IT AIN'T RIGHT! THEY OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING!
ONE NIGHT...
BARNES! I DIDN'T SEND FOR YOU!
YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS MADNESS, KARDOFF!
NOBODY ASKED YOU! I'LL DO WHAT I WANT! AND YOU'LL DO WHAT I SAY!
I'M SORRY, KARDOFF! I'M THROUGH!
THROUGH? WHY YOU...
I WON'T HAVE ANY PART OF THIS... THIS MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE!
5

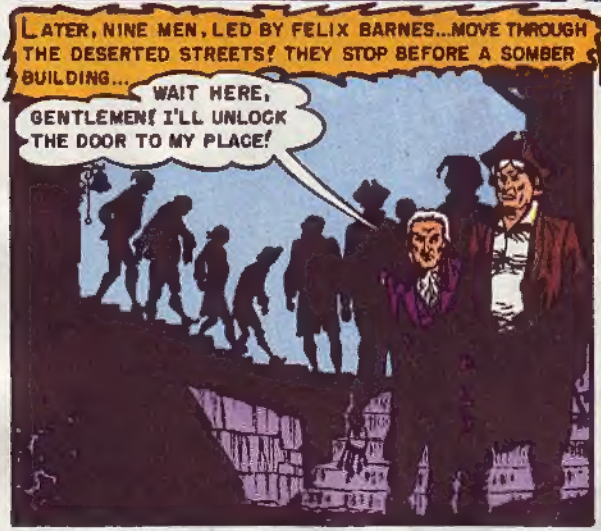
AND IF THERE'S ANY MORE KILLING, KARDOFF, I'LL...I'LL FIGHT YOU! I'LL FIGHT YOU WITH EVERY MEANS AT MY COMMAND!

HAH! YOU'LL FIGHT ME? LEGALLY?
YES, KARDOFF! LEGALLY!

GOOD NIGHT, KARDOFF!
BE CAREFUL, FELIX! I MIGHT HAVE TO ADD YOUR NAME TO MY LIST!

AND WITHIN A WEEK, THE THIRD MEMBER OF THE JURY MEETS A VIOLENT DEATH...
BETTER SEND FOR THE MORGUE WAGON, SIR!
ANOTHER OF KARDOFF'S VICTIMS...

THAT NIGHT, FELIX BARNES CALLS A MEETING OF THE REMAINING JURYMEN...
GENTLEMEN! THE LAW IS HELPLESS IN THIS CASE! KARDOFF IS BEYOND ITS REACH! IT IS TIME WE TOOK THE MATTER INTO OUR OWN HANDS!
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN, BARNES?


LATER, NINE MEN, LED BY FELIX BARNES...MOVE THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS! THEY STOP BEFORE A SOMBER BUILDING...
WAIT HERE, GENTLEMEN! I'LL UNLOCK THE DOOR TO MY PLACE!

THEN THEY MOVE ON! ONLY NOW THEY ARE CARRYING SOMETHING! A COFFIN...
UNDERTAKER
FUNERALS ARRANGED

PETER KARDOFF IS STARTLED FROM HIS SLEEP AS THE NINE JURYMEN AND FELIX BARNES SMASH DOWN HIS DOOR AND RUSH UP TO HIS ROOM...
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WE'VE COME FOR YOU, PETER! WE'VE COME TO DO OUR DUTY!
THEY SEIZE THE STRUGGLING, SCREAMING PETER KARDOFF AND FORCE HIM INTO THE COFFIN...
NO! YOU CAN'T DO THIS... IT'S MURDER! MURDER!
NO, PETER! YOU'RE WRONG!
THEN... ANXIOUS HANDS NAIL THE COFFIN LID DOWN...
COME, GENTLEMEN! HIS GRAVE IS WAITING!
IT HAS BEEN WAITING ALL TOO LONG!
NO! NO!
A STRANGE PROCESSION TREADS THE COBBLESTONE STREETS THAT NIGHT! MUFFLED SCREAMS ECHO OFF DRAWN SHUTTERS! SOON THE COFFIN-LADEN GROUP LEAVES THE TOWN AND ENTERS THE CEMETERY...
THIS WAY! THIS WAY!
YAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
THE COFFIN IS DROPPED INTO THE THREE MONTH OLD, RAIN-SOAKED GRAVE! THEN THE PILE OF DIRT IS SPADED IN...
YOU'LL HANG FOR THIS! IT'S MURDER...
NO, PETER! WE WON'T HANG!
SOON THE DIRT ALMOST FILLS THE GAPING BLACK HOLE...
YOU'RE DEAD PETER! DEAD! THEY CAN'T PUNISH US FOR BURYING A DEAD MAN!
WELL! HEE, HEE! THERE'S A DELIGHTFUL LITTLE TALE, EH! SO PETER KARDOFF'S PEERS HAD TO DO A LITTLE MORE JURY DUTY THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR! HEE, HEE! WELL, THAT ABOUT COVERS IT! SEE YOU IN MY OWN BOOK, THE HAUNT OF FEAR, WITH MORE CHILLING TALES LIKE THIS ONE! 'BYE, NOW!

The Old Witch